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# Imagined Communities: Changing Markets and the Implications for 21st Century Mali China Migration

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Imagined Communities: Changing Markets and the Implications for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mali China  
Migration

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## **Abstract**

Over the last decade there has been a huge increase in engagement between China and Africa across all fronts of foreign relations especially in the realms of trade, finance and migration. As China continues to push into Africa in pursuit of economic resources and diplomatic relations, many Africans are migrating to China and specifically Guangzhou in search of economic opportunity backed by cheap labor markets and the prospects for “low end globalization.” As the contemporary African presence in China is a relatively new phenomenon, so are the discourses surrounding its presence, discourses often relegated to the spheres of economics, boasting China as the destination for opportunity or the one-dimensional notion of “Africaness.” the concept which supports the single African experience. The concept of Africa in the context of China, and more specifically Guangzhou, is multifaceted. The failure to recognize the variegated nature of the African presence, of the African population and composition, and the failure to examine how factors such as economics, immigration policy and race ideology have affected the way Africans have chosen to facilitate their host space, results in the greater failure to delineate and engage some of the most extraordinary implications of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization. This study aims to fill this gap.

African history, diaspora, transnational migration, migrant, Mali, gender studies, caste system, community formation, Guangzhou, Xiao Bei, Chocolate City

## **Acknowledgments**

Conducting research in Guangzhou, amidst the growing racial implication coupled with the language barrier, has not been a simple undertaking. However, with the guidance and support of some phenomenal individuals, conducting this field study became one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life. The prospects of this project would not have been possible without the aid and encouragement of Director Lu Yuan who is both generous and accommodating, who constantly encouraged me to follow through with my research intents, no matter how challenging or overwhelming. I would also like to thank the SIT crew, Zhou Yan and Charles for entertaining my curiosity and aiding my confusion, and for their unwavering support through both the ISP period as well as the broader SIT experience.

I owe great gratitude to my Guangzhou family. I would like to thank my homestay family for allowing me into their space, providing me the opportunity to gain insight into their lives. I would also like to thank professor Yang of Yunnan University for her contacts in Guangzhou. Through her network, I got the chance to meet some awesome people. Two of these awesome people, Xiao Di and Jake Zhou of the Sun Yat Sen University Anthropology department in Guangzhou provided me their time amidst their busy undergraduate schedules and over milk tea, helped me organize and solidify my thoughts. For these reasons, I am immensely greatly.

## Introduction and Peer Review

Women in iridescent garments greet in native tongue, flock food markets to purchase native products. Men in kaftans weigh and stack boxes shambolically throughout vibrant markets and hotel lobbies, and the dazed sounds of French and broken English reverberate through the various shops and restaurants, filled with black faces. "It is just another street scene from the back alleys of Cairo or Lagos; except it is the southern Chinese business hub of Guangzhou."<sup>1</sup> Referred to as Little Africa, or rather disparagingly, Chocolate City (referring to the number of Africans living in the area estimated to be 100,000), Africa's newest diaspora serves as a reversal of the traditional Chinese migration story, a different kind of "China Town", a living example of the increasing ties between China and Africa, perhaps one of the most important and least documented stories of the 21st century.<sup>2</sup>

The African presence in contemporary China has become a relatively new phenomenon. Since the country's late 1990's economic boom, thousands of traders and perspective businessmen predominately from Sub Saharan Africa have migrated to the city of Guangzhou, engaging what Gordon Mathews defines as "low-end globalization" and creating African settlements in the middle of the southern Chinese metropolis.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary analysis on the African presence in China has been relegated to the spheres of economic relation, boasting China as the destination for opportunity. This opportunity however comes with great cost as the influx of Africans to Guangzhou has been met with mixed reactions from the host population, opening new discourses on race, immigration and identity.

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1. Gillet, K. Eastern Promise in Little Africa. *The Global Mall*. Retrieved May 25, 2014, from <http://www.the-globalmall.org/features/eastpromise-in-little-africa/546/>, 2013

2. Bodamo, A. *Africans in China a sociocultural study and its implications on Africa- China relations*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012

3. Mathews, G. *Ghetto at the center of the world: Chungking Mansion, Hong Kong*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011

Mainland anthropological attempts to discuss race ideology have resulted in the perpetuation of a one-dimensional notion of “Africaness”, an ideology which places foreigner as directly proportional to skin pigmentation, thus granting little distinction between continental African and Diasporan African. Dr. Adams B. Bodomo’s renowned work *Africa in China: A Sociocultural Study and Its Implications on Africa-China Relations*, the first book-length study on this topic, creates a social profile of the African communities in six particular cities of China (including Guangzhou) and attempts to describe them through the crucial lens of “what is it like to be an African in China”?<sup>4</sup> Although Dr. Adams engages both qualitative and quantitative techniques in the effort to construct sociolinguistic and sociocultural profiles of the everyday life of Africans in major cities in China, he ends up perpetuating the “single African experience”. Although the study engages members of various ethnic migrant communities including in-depth interviews with leaders, its attempt to provide insight on issues such as why Africans go to China, what they do there, how they communicate with their host population and what opportunities and problems they encounter, it generalizes these experiences by emphasizing the “common migrant struggle”.

The concept of Africa in the context of China, and more specifically Guangzhou, is multifaceted. The failure to recognize the variegated nature of the African presence, of the African population and composition, and the failure to examine how factors such as economics, immigration policy and race ideology have affected the multiple African identities and their construction of community in a Chinese social context results in the greater failure to delineate and engage one of the most extraordinary implications of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization. This paper aims to fill this gap.

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<sup>4</sup> Bodomo, A. *Africans in China a sociocultural study and its implications on Africa- China relations*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012

In engaging a very narrow and specific framework, this paper examines the compromise of migration, who were these people before they migrated? Who are they now? And why, what factors have caused their evolution and the way they have decided to facilitate their host space? These are the broader questions I aim to answer. More specifically, I want to examine the compromise of migration through the dynamics of grouping. In what ways have people grouped to accommodate the social and economic changes of their host space? By engaging one migrant community, the enclave of Malian immigrants in Guangzhou, I have taken a more nuanced approach. This paper creates a comprehensive analysis in a two dimensional framework. First, it engages the close-knit community and dependence based West African Caste system to lay a comparative foundation on which to examine the evolution and stratification of community structure and the identity formation of Malians in Guangzhou. This paper does not necessarily look at the specifics of the Caste system but its greater implication of grouping, structural dependence and community cycle. To what extent has the dependence structure of the caste system been engaged or reinterpreted? Second, I examine the forces which have influenced these changes, more specifically under this section, I examine how social and economic changes have contributed to the structural transformation of a former caste society and how these changes internally affect the cultural exchange both intra-ethnically and with regards to the host population. In answering the above questions, this paper offers a lens through which to engage the internal workings of Africa's newest diaspora, a method which views the African communities of Guangzhou as separate and distinct, reflecting the true meanings of the varied "what is it like to be African in Guangzhou?"<sup>5</sup>

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5 Bodamo, *Africans in China*, p.22



## **Background Information**

In placing the Malian migration experience into a historical context, two preliminary topics must be mentioned, (1) The history of a Caste System in Mali (2) The History of Guangzhou, and its economic boom which has triggered the influx of African migrants to its borders. These topics are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the Malian migration story, as both have influenced contemporary Malian identity in the Chinese social context.

## **History of Caste in Mali**

The caste system of Mali is a descent based social hierarchy. The system is made up of the Malinke, Soninke and Bambara people who form the Mande language group. This community-oriented system is based on occupational specializations in which membership is based on ascription. Being a “casted” person however, is more than pursuing an occupation, it is a way of being, “a form of moral and physical constitution of persons that is central to indigenous conceptions of caste.”<sup>6</sup> Although caste is linked to the social play of power involving distinct categorization of people born into limited mobile frameworks, caste systems in a broad sense, especially those of the Mande speaking people of West Africa, are intricate structural systems which govern community interaction by engaging the concept of order. It is order that drives caste societies. An order of dependence where a higher caste class is responsible for the economic security of a lower caste, a concept which makes caste ideology fascinating.

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<sup>6</sup>Marcel Mauss, “The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies,” New York: Norton Books, 1967.

<http://homepage.mac.com/allanmcnyc/textpdfs/mauss1.pdf> accessed 2 February 2012.

The institutional complex of Caste has been found in Mali from at least as early as 1300's. The establishment of caste, or caste like divisions in Mali is sometimes attributed to the mystical elements of the Mali Empire. The term caste however, was a colonial concept introduced into West Africa by scholars who borrowed it from Indianist literature to refer to social distinctions drawn between local populations of agriculturists on the one hand and crafts specialist on the other."<sup>7</sup> This brings up the possibility, as it can be argued, that caste ideologies were part of a native discourse in which they was used as a "colonial tactic of classification and categorization of populations in order to achieve a sense of order in the mosaic of local populations".<sup>8</sup> Never the less and unbeknownst to many, Caste systems exists in various geographic regions of Africa especially sub-Saharanregions. Caste ideologies have,especially for Mali, shaped and influenced various aspects of life, principles which continue to be ingrained in culture.

Caste roles in Mali are divided between the Horos (nobles/freeborn) and the Nakamalas (caste people). The Nakamalas of the caste system are divided into several subgroups: the Modinu who are the scholars and healers, often skilled as sorcerers. They often engage traditional herbal medicines as well as mystic mediums to "stabilize society", both internal and external healings.<sup>9</sup> The Garanko are leatherworkers and bards. The Komo are considered slave decedents as the word "komo" literally means the slaves. Komo perform domestic work, a range of tasks from cleaning households, announcing births to preparing wedding feasts. The Tago are blacksmiths, their tasks include crafting gold for brides and agricultural tools for farming season. The Grios or Jaru, are the storytellers, historians and praise singers, the backbone of caste

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<sup>7</sup>Marcel Mauss, "The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies," New York: Norton Books, 1967.

<http://homepage.mac.com/allanmcnyc/textpdfs/mauss1.pdf> accessed 2 February 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Eide, A, Discrimination based on work and decent: expanded working paper. Geneva: UN, 2003

societies. Griots, during the time of Sundiata, “tutored princes and gave council to kings”.<sup>10</sup> The role of a Griot includes the memorization of significant events such as births, deaths marriage, journeys and wars ensuring that the collective heritage, culture and lineage of a family line continues. The Nakamalas perform the mentioned tasks for the Horo, the nobles, whose family lines usually inherit members of the lower caste. The role of the Hore is to ensure the economic stability of the Nakamala, each task performed by the Nakamala is reimbursed with monetary funds or gifts. With little mobility allowed, caste people have historically constructed communities lasting generations.

The intricate system of the caste allows little mobility, abides by a strict stratified order, rarely challenged on the home front. Yet, what happens when a former caste people enter a new framework, a world distinct of their own, where changing markets and cultural aesthetics allow greater mobility, unrestricted by caste constructions? How will this new world and its new conditions shape a new identity? Will it bring former caste people together, in solidarity, heightening caste principals of dependence based grouping or will it do the opposite. These questions serve as a framework in which to study the internal dynamic as well as the structural evolution of the Malian population in Guangzhou. By relying heavily on in-depth interviews, participant observations and anecdotal experiences, I hope to catalyze a new framework which will contribute to the greater knowledge of contemporary African diasporas.

## **History of Guangzhou and Contemporary African Presence**

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<sup>10</sup> Mali: Africa’s Empire of Empires. *Mali Empire & Griot Traditions.*, 2014

Historically a center of trade to foreigners, Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, China's richest Province, is an economic development zone. As an essential port of the Maritime Silk Road, Guangzhou has been, for the last two thousand years of its history, one of the most important commercial exchange cities of China. At the end of the Ming Dynasty in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the treaty of Thirteen Hongs made Guangzhou China's first city of foreign export trades. Its ideal geographic location situated in the center of the Pearl River delta and neighboring both Macau and Hong Kong, Guangzhou, or popularly known "The World Factory", is infused with overseas-founded enterprises and is often chosen by foreign investors as a major station for Chinese investment.

The by annual Chinese Export Commodities Fair, established in 1957, the largest trade fair in China is held in Guangzhou. This trade engages over fifty trading delegations composed of China's best foreign enterprises including "scientific institutes, wholly foreign-owned enterprises and foreign trade companies from more than forty countries."<sup>11</sup> In 2001, the fair committee amended its principles and became China Import and Export Commodities Fair (CIECF) to hold import as well as export functions. 2006 as the 100th fair, the CIECF engaged 190,000 foreign traders from above 200 countries, amounting to about 34 billion US dollars in trade contracts.<sup>12</sup> After China joined WHO in 2001, the scale of foreign business in Guangzhou further soared and the City attracted more and more foreign influx.<sup>13</sup>

The reputation of Guangzhou as the economic factory of the world supported by its ideal geographic conditions as well as entrepreneurial locality has allowed the economy of Guangzhou to maintain high increasing rates for the last twenty years. Guangzhou's continuous economic

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11 Main Fairs in China (n.d). Main Fairs in China. <http://www.chinaembassy.bg/eng/dtxw/t1> 2014

12 Ibid.

13Bodamo, A. *Africans in China a sociocultural study and its implications on Africa- China relations*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012

progression is largely attributed to its export oriented economy specializing in light industry products such as textile and garments at competitive rates and low labour costs. This economy has attracted a massive influx of foreigners including African traders seeking to engage low-end globalization, which allows for the investment of low capital.

Two events, the Asian Financial Crisis followed by China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 catalysed 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa China relations which began in 1997. Since this period, the city of Guangzhou has been a lure for perspective African traders looking to capitalize on the growing demand for inexpensive products and the availability of these products in China. At the same time, China's investment into Africa became substantial leading to the presence of more than two million Chinese people in Africa.<sup>14</sup> It is the latter that has received sustained research in the area of China-Africa relations.

## **Research Methods**

This research took place during the months of April and May of 2014, beginning on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April and ending on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May.

My chosen field site in Guangzhou was the ten-kilometer strip of Xiao Bei Street, from the Tianxiu Trading Mansion to the Canaan Trading center. Xiao Bei holds one of Guangzhou largest African communities with an estimated population of about 100,000.<sup>15</sup> Xiao Bei is largely inhabited by Sub Saharan Muslims from countries such as Mali, Nigeria, Guinea and Cameroon. This area harbors a mosaic of African communities dispersed on the periphery of the city center

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14 Bodamo, *Africans in China*, 12

15 Castillo, R (n.d). Economic Nomads in a City of Flows. *Think African Press*. <http://thinkafricapress.com/economy/nomcity-flows-china-africa-guangzhou>. Retrieved May 27, 2014

as well as many hotels catering to short-term traders and a variety of restaurants specializing in ethnic foods. Here, one can find two types of markets; African markets which sell traditional African products such as African fabrics and Chinese wholesale markets which sell general products, both markets generally controlled by Chinese businessmen. All of these factors, have made Xiao Bei an ideal location for this field-based study performance.

Through the duration of this project, I have interviewed 21 people at a ratio of 70% male to 30% female. The interviewees, as requirement for this study, have lived in Guangzhou for at least two years. These interviews included both in-depth and casual conversations, both Malians as well as some members of the ethnic groups of Cameroon, Congo and the Gambia. I have also interviewed members of the Chinese host population including a professor as well as students from Sun Yat Sen University. I have had the fortunate opportunity to engage both Malian community leaders as well as traditional Griots and Malian Chinese inter racial couples that gave insight on their roles in contemporary migrant society. Research took place in a variety of locations most convenient for the interviewee, primarily in restaurants while they ate, in their offices while they initiated transactions as well as in markets where they sourced out products.

In addition, I relied on participant observation as a complimentary research method, spending hours in markets and restaurant mingling with the population, attending events or just spending time with my Malian host family both in their home or out on errands.

**\*\*Note: All participant names have been concealed due to privacy concerns\*\***

**Redefining Terms: *Community, Imagined Community and Migration***

In this section I briefly clarify the terms of Community, Imagined Community and Migrant with specific emphasis on how these terms will be engaged in this study. As these are brief descriptions, they will be described in detail as the paper proceeds.

## **Community**

Dr. Adams Bodomo describes community as a group of people defined by constant internal interaction and networking. Through this definition, he engages a more anthropological classification which proceeds to state that a *community* or a “*linguistic community*” is “a social group, either monolingual or multi lingual, defined by frequency of social interaction patterns and set of from the surrounding areas by weakness in the lines of communication.”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore according to Adams, *community* is appropriate in defining Africans in China because there is much interaction along regional, national religious and linguistic groupings.”

This paper denies these notions in their relations to the Malian community of Guangzhou. Although the Malian in Guangzhou share similar linguistic histories, religious groundwork and geographic origins, they do not, as defined by this study, emblemize these definitions of community. Additionally, this paper engages the broader definition of community which defines it as a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage. This definition is appropriate because it does not rely on the concept of *interaction* as the constant for *community*. This paper argues that community can exist without the frequency of social interaction.

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16 Bodomo, A., & Teixeira-E-Silva, R. Language Matters: The Role of Linguistic Identity in the Establishment of the Lusophone African Community in Macau. *African Studies*, 5.

## **Imagined Community**

Furthermore, this paper engages the concept of *imagined community* coined by Benedict Anderson. An imagined community is different from an actual community in the sense that “it is not based on the everyday face to face interactions of its members.”<sup>17</sup> This paper proceeds to define an imagined community as a socially constructed community that is gender defined. In describing the Malian community of Guangzhou, an imagined community is, argued by this study, a community confined in a spectrum of which on one extreme, lays men whom because they engage the economic realm, take no part in community affairs while on the other extreme lays women, whom because, they lack involvement in the economic realm and are confined to the home space, exaggerate the concept of community as a means to hold on to cultural rituals and ideals.

## **Migrant**

For the purpose of this paper, a migrant is neither a person constantly in motion nor is it a person defined by work contracts. A migrant is an individual who has facilitated a host space and whose return to a source land is indefinite. A migrant however, for the context of this study is not fully acclimated and his/her day-to-day experiences change with market fluctuations as well as broad factors such as race conceptions and policy.

## **Introduction to Malians in Guangzhou**

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson, B.R. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso (extended edition), 1991.



In the last decade, thousands of Malians have found themselves in Guangzhou, China's "World Factory". It is often the landmark for opportunity backed by the prospects of low-end globalization which serve as the catalyst to the Mali-China migration story.<sup>18</sup> China surprisingly is not often priority on the migration list as many Malians often seek entry to the more popular western states of the United States and nations in Europe. As visa quotas to these nations are often scarce, many Malians, especially working age men find themselves on the Chinese landscape. Guangzhou, often the destination of choice for its economic history and close proximity to manufacturing cooperation of Guangdong, becomes the playing ground on which these migrants bet their fortunes. In Guangzhou, and more specifically Xiao Bei these migrants find themselves forced into the vortex of a new world coupled with both prosperity and sociocultural challenges.

The status and social role of Malians in Guangzhou have been formed by a complex interplay of both traditional and socioeconomic factors. The enclave of Malians is a very distinct and discrete group. Although they account for the second largest population in Guangzhou, Malians often keep a low profile, seldom garnering public attention and rarely associated with public nuisance or criminal activity. These characteristics may be anchored in the traditional structure of the Malian identity, as can be sensed through interviewee number seven's sentiments:

We don't have time for nonsense! We are here for one reason and that is to make money and take care of our families back home. We are not like these other groups here, we are a peaceful people, we are Muslims and we have responsibilities. As men, we don't have time to play like these Nigerians with no responsibility; we have wives, mothers, fathers and even whole villages that are counting on us.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mathews, *Ghetto at the Center of the World*, p.6

<sup>19</sup> Dao, Haji. Malian Businessman, Interviewed by author. Personal interview. Xiao Bei, May 2014.

For many Malians, especially those engaged in this study, these sentiments are valid thus these ideologies, as can be argued, may speak to why Malians in Guangzhou keep such a traditional and isolated profile.

### *Migrant Settlement: Area of Occupation and Household Dynamics*

In order to entirely understand the traditional framework of Malians in Guangzhou, this section describes the Malian area of occupation as well as household dynamics. The Malians of Xiao Bei occupy two primary high-rise apartment complexes, *Tianxiu building*, often the first choice for newcomers, as well as *Xia Tang Xi Lou complex* for reasons of convenience.<sup>20</sup> These locations are of short proximity to the Airport Express Line, Guangzhou Railway and Metro stations and most importantly, a short distance from fair and distribution centers such as Zhanxi Watch Wholesale market, Liuhua Cloth Wholesale Market and Baima Cloth Wholesale market in addition to many others. Although the rent of Xiao Bei has skyrocketed as of 2006 to 6000-7000 Yuan per month, these expenditures correlate with Guangzhou's average level.<sup>21</sup> Tianxiu building, as a typical case, consists of three high-rise apartment complexes each composed of thirty-six floors apartments of which the first four floors are commercial space, six hundred office compartments and over four hundred residential spaces.<sup>22</sup> These spaces serve as ideal locations of which Malians can structure a new life, as in one vicinity, the average Malian can live, run an office space and keep track of market fluctuations as well as conveniently accompany clients to markets.

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20 Zhigang, Li. Ethnic Enclave of Transnational Migrants in Guangzhou: A Case Study of Xiaobei. *Center for Urban and Regional Studies*, Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China 2013

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

### *Home Away From Home: Inside the Malian's Living Space*

Entering a Malian home, one is instantly greeted with the scent of traditional incense. (*Churai*) burning on charcoal, the sounds of Bambara griots vocalizing calming and inspirational tunes and the allure of ethnic foods sizzling on the stove, truly a home away from home. The Malian household is often very traditional and far from assimilation. Malians in Guangzhou rarely watch traditional Chinese television or consume Chinese foods or even use chopsticks. The primary language spoken in the household is often either Bambara or Soninke and meat products are often purchased from Halal shops. The daily diet is carbohydrate concentrated, as the staple food of both lunch and dinner is rice. Walk into an average bedroom and one will find a traditional Malian accented room with beds and suitcases spread with traditional tie-dyed sheets, frames inscribed with Islamic and Quranic texts hung in various locations.

### *The Co-Wife Situation*

The tradition of polygamy exists in contemporary Malian homes in Guangzhou. Often, as Malian men settle, they summon their wives in sharing their new settlement. This sometimes involves transporting two or three wives at various times. Unlike in Mali, where co-wives coexist in very large households and enjoy separate quarters, in Guangzhou, they are often confined to very small often two bedroom apartments and coexisting becomes problematic as tolerance levels are challenged. Take for example interviewee number 2, the neighbor of my host mother in Guangzhou, a co-wife describe her frustrations:

I don't know why these men bring all their wives to this horrible place. We are co-wives which means we already are conditioned not to like each other but here we are forced into this little space where habits come out and tension rises. My co-wife and I get into so many fights that we sometimes have to involve the authorities; sometimes both of us even get arrested. It's just a shame and the fault of our husband for bringing us both here.<sup>23</sup>

The question of why Malian men bring multiple wives to Guangzhou is unclear as their visa holding statuses usually cause them to make frequent trips back to the source land and as the living expenses as well as the nature of their work in Guangzhou are constantly in fluctuation.

### **Gender And The Construction of Imagined Communities**

The gender dynamics of Malians in Guangzhou is highly stratified, each sex engaging defined roles. This section surveys the gender mechanics of the Malian community and examines how gender roles dictate the perception and construction of community.

#### *Men and community*

Malian men of Guangzhou assume the patriarchal role of “provider.” Their responsibility as heads of households includes providing for both an immediate family either residing in Guangzhou or Mali and an extended family including parents, siblings, friends and family friends residing in Mali. Their income earned is apportioned into distinct categories: food expenses, living expenses (including maid fees), hospital expenses (no governmental aid covers

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23 Sow, Haja, Malian Housewife. Interviewed by author. Personal Interview. Xia Tang Xi Lou . April 2014.

immigrants in China), and monthly visa fees. As for occupation, every male individual interviewed referred to themselves as businessmen (business, importer, exporter or wholesaler). As 90% of the sample received less than four years of formal education, their occupational choices are not varied, thus arriving in Guangzhou, the average Malian already has a specific framework for work.

### *“I Sell Everything” Type of Business*

Most of the male sample when asked, “what do you sell?” responded with “*I sell everything.*” I sell everything may be regarded as a strange statement by an individual unfamiliar with the business nature of Malians in Guangzhou. Most Malian men do not run shops specialized in specific merchandise, as this method for immigrants whom neither have Chinese wives nor Chinese business partners is costly, involves an arduous process and virtually impossible for visa holders. Instead, these men rent office spaces through Chinese networks. As described later, the offices which Malian men occupy for business transactions are usually located in the same vicinity and this setting, as proven by this study projects tension, as the business sector becomes grounds for a survival based in competition. This environment affects community structure. In these offices, they serve as middlemen between a potential buyer and a manufacturer or wholesaler. It is in this manner that they can tap into the various markets including textile, cosmetics and electronics. Thus, the fortune of the average Malian in Guangzhou is not constant, heavily dependent on contacts and market fluctuations. In addition, many also take advantage of the wholesale markets by purchasing goods and shipping them to

Mali where they own shops usually run by relatives. This allows for additional income in accommodating the instability and constant fluctuation of the markets.

The nature of work Malian men engage, coupled with market fluctuations and instability of fortune affects community structure and the group dynamics inscribed by caste ideologies becomes nonexistent. During this study, I rarely witnessed two Malian men engaged in conversation. Partially, the reason for this disconnect is due to the tendency of single representatives of households to migrate to China. As China is relatively Africa's newest diaspora and the Chinese migration, unlike other Diasporas, involves capital, usually this capital can only be invested in one male figure per household. Therefore, kinships rarely exist. Instead, you have a group of men, distinct in ideology, competing for limited resources. Although Malian men have a nation-based association, as does every other immigrant group in Guangzhou, this organization is more associated with the aspiration to bridge affiliations with the Chinese administration and not necessarily aimed in strengthening internal community dynamics. When asked why the Malian men of Guangzhou do not seem to be a unified force, interviewee number thirteen stated:

When a lot of these young men arrive to Guangzhou, they pump up their shoulders and become *Mafans (troublesome)*. They lack ethics and forget how their mothers taught them to interact with their brothers. Here (Guangzhou) we live in the jungle, it is every man for himself. If you get too close to a person and try to help them in the name of Allah, they end up stealing the clients you've worked so hard to get. They don't care about your ability to feed you family. Everyone is selfish and that is why it is better to stick to your self. We are battling ourselves as well as the greedy Chinese.<sup>24</sup>

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24 Haddi, Alagi. Malian Businessman. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Tianxiu Building. May 2014

If interviewee number thirteen has made one valid point, it is that there is little association both within the Malian community and with regards to the host population. As described later, there are greater factors which project this disassociation.

When asked whether caste structures were adhered to and whether people identify with caste identities, interviewee number thirteen, a casteed Tageh proceed to reply:

We don't have time for that! You have to understand Guangzhou is a different place. We have bigger issues to deal with than deciding who is what and therefore who should do what. Those ideas are for traditional old people, here anyone, whether a Kome or Horeh, can make money. No one would dare tell me to follow a role. I am even better off than some Horeh here.

In Guangzhou, as can be sensed in interview number thirteen, the enclave of Malian men have abandoned traditional caste ideals on community and grouping as interethnic social connections remain weak. Grouping does not exist amongst this gender. The nature of their work, as well as the availability of the economic markets to former casteed people have (1) created a very fluid environment, where community perceptions are based on individualistic and survival oriented ideals (although a community organization exists, the intentions are not in accordance with traditional community principals) (2) created an environment where caste roles have been lost to modernity and economics. Thus this paper argues that because of the social and economic implications of living in Guangzhou, as described above, Malian men have not been able to form community.

Women and the Social Network

Malian Women in Guangzhou assume secondary roles. These roles conform to patriarchal ideals on gender as the role of the Malian women is confined to the home sphere. They are “housewives” and their roles encompass a range of domestic tasks from cleaning, cooking and caring for both children and husbands.

In Islam, a woman’s role is to make sure her husband and kids are fed and her home is presentable. If her husband is not pleased with her, paradise will not be hers.<sup>25</sup>(Interview # 1)

These ingrained ideals have kept many Malian women away from the occupational and educational sector. Most of the women interviewed have not received any form of education and most entered marriage at very young ages. These women are completely segregated from the host population except in specific cases such as communicating with Chinese maids and buying food supplies from Chinese merchants in markets.

This segregation, has contributed to the fascinating nature of the Malian women’s realm. These women, because they are rarely involved in the market sector and do not engage any means of production have, unlike their male counterparts, exaggerated community. This community however is not based on traditional principals of constant interaction, it actually presents the opposite. Caste roles although heightened and constructed to accommodate new surroundings exist as Malian women desperately pursue a formation of identity tied with their source land of Mali.

In Xiaobei, Malian women engage the versatility of the social network “We Chat” to create an imagined community. In this virtual community, any Malian woman can join, as familiarity and kinship are not pre requisites. Once joined, one is updated on current events as

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25 Wague, Fatoumata. Malian Housewife. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xia Tang Xi Lou. April 2014.



well as community celebrations which are also coordinated through this network. The voice application of “We Chat” is the communication tool of choice as most of the women cannot read or write. Through this network, baby naming ceremonies and wedding are announced and the attendance is largely made up of this network of unfamiliar individuals whom at first according to my host mother “stand awkwardly at and then loosen up except by then, it is time to leave.”<sup>26</sup>

Though the network constructed by the Malian women, Caste ideologies are reengaged. The “Komo” of the group prepare dishes in their homes and “Griots” prepare universal praise songs. During the celebration, the present “Horo” in celebratory manner, throw money in the direction of the caste people. The biggest celebration and display of culture is found in the “Griot” concert organized by the group. A couple times a year, local or professional Malian Griots are brought to Guangzhou where they hold concerts and offer universal praise songs to the female population. Again, in preparation for the concerts, roles are divided based on caste ascription and funds are used as reimbursement. Men never attend these gatherings. When I asked interviewee number 17, the oldest local Griot in Guangzhou, what she thought about these celebrations she responded,

It is the best we can do to connect to our culture. It is no longer about money but culture. If we deny that these things exist, our children will never grow knowing their culture.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to a cultural extension, a realm in which these women conquer their identity, this network and the versatility of social networking serves as an incredible implication of 21<sup>st</sup> localized globalization.

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<sup>26</sup>Wague, Fatoumata. Malian Housewife. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xia Tang Xi Lou. April 2014.

<sup>27</sup>Mama, Mama. Malian Griot and Housewife. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Tianxiu Building. May 2014.

## **Greater Implications of Grouping: The Malian Story**

This section serves as the heart of the discussion as it explicates and thus brings to light the fundamental factors which contribute to the construction of imagined communities and the isolation of the Malian in Guangzhou both inter ethnically and with regards to the host population. This section further examines the role of changing markets as well as the social implications of race construction and Immigration policy in perpetuating isolation and the lack of traditional community formation amongst Malians in Guangzhou and with regards to their host population.

## **Housing and Migration: Sorting Mechanisms and Residential Segregation**

The Chinese government's attempt to segregate migrants from the urban host population by confining them to segregated regions on the periphery of the city center has contributed to the inter ethnic as well as external isolation of Malians in Guangzhou. *In Language Matters: The Role of Linguistic Identity in the Establishment of the Lusophone African Community*, Dr. Teixeira- E- Silva argues that there is across cultural theory of identity formation and community building which states that the five variables of physical appearance, ethnic language, traditional food, traditional clothes and traditional music serve as the set of features which draw people together in forming an interactive migrant community.<sup>28</sup> This field study denies these notions by suggesting that there are often more imposed factors which initiated the grouping of migrants and in the case of the Malian enclave, disrupts traditional caste structures, such as the method implemented by the Guangzhou government, segregated housing.

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28 Bodomo, A., & Teixeira-E-Silva, R. *Language Matters: The Role of Linguistic Identity in the Establishment of the Lusophone African Community in Macau*. *African Studies*, 5.

In the 1980's the Provincial and National government set forth a sorting mechanism, which allocated migrant communities on the periphery of the Guangzhou city center. As farmers moved out, high-rise buildings began to take form reflecting China's entry into the globalized world. As the first African and Middle Eastern migrants began to settle in the late 1980's and early 1990's Xiaobei became the region sanctioned for their living. As Black immigrants sought living in other locations, they often were denied, accused of contributing to the depreciating value of the areas they sought to inhabit, thus migrant spaces became more and more constricted as local Chinese moved out in mostly what seemed to be xenophobic reactions and the eight kilometer strip of Xiao Bei became specifically allocated for the mostly African migrant population.

What becomes the outcome as migrants are forced to live and work in such close proximity, as is the reality in Xiao Bei? As suggested by this study, the attempt to create a migrant specified community, which encompasses both living and work quarters, where members compete for the same limited resources, results in the isolation within that community regardless of similar sociocultural backgrounds. The area of Xiao Bei is defined by competition, a "survival grounds" where stability is not the norm, forcing people to create individualized strategies for survival. As competition creates tension within the ethnic community, race considerations create isolation with regards to the host population. The sorting mechanism of housing is one of the least considered aspects of migrant identity formation.

### **Economics: The Implications of Changing Markets**

The Economic realm is one of the most important determinants of the Malian identity construction in Guangzhou as the lives of Malian migrants evolve around the changing markets.

The market fluctuations dictate both the day-to-day activity of the Malian as well as his interaction with members of the host population. Even meal and daily activities are scheduled in accordance to the markets. For example, in my host household, breakfast was usually served between 12pm and 2pm, lunch between 6pm and 8pm and dinner between 11pm and 2am. This is because, the African market begins operation late afternoon as many spend earlier hours sourcing new products and studying the markets. This also means that markets close very late usually between 11 and 3pm explaining the odd bedtime engaged by most Malians which is usually between 3am and 6am.

The nature of work engaged by the immigrant population has contributed to its isolation from its host population. As the immigrant nature of work takes full force in the late afternoon, the majority host population, usually working class individuals works a normal days' shift usually returning home to rest in the late afternoons, forming a disconnect in this sector. This factor not only has served as a barrier for association and assimilation, but has opened new discourses on race, take for example interview number sixteen, a native Chinese:

Africans are different; they are so barbaric, so very strange. They make so much noise we cannot sleep. They act like they are back home I don't think they know that they are in China. Here we have laws, people cannot just run lose like animals.<sup>29</sup>

The difference in work dynamics has caused many Chinese people of Xiao Bei to move out, seeking housing elsewhere, further intensifying the disconnect between populations and the unlikeliness of true immersion.

The extent of interaction between the Malian and Chinese in the business sector also evolves around Economics. When the Chinese African interaction is confined to Economics or

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<sup>29</sup> Li, Piao. Chinese Tenant. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xiao Bei. May 2014.

the flow of currency, race does not serve as a factor on the part of the Chinese person. I have found that whenever I interviewed a Chinese wholesaler or even a shopkeeper or landlord, the African perception is usually positive, however when I moved out of that realm, race becomes an integral part of the conversation. When I interviewed the Landlord of Xia Tang Xi Lou about the African presence, this is what she had to say:

The majority of the African population is good although everywhere has good and bad people. Here they pay rent on time. By paying rent on time, they are helping me pay my bank loans so truly they are helping me out of my financial crisis.<sup>30</sup>

The majority of Malians engaged in this study have however views these sentiments as a form of Chinese tactic, only associating good with the benefits of monetary exchange. Bantu, a Malian businessman I interviewed in Baima Cloth Wholesale Center stated when asked to present his thoughts on the Chinese “positive” perception of Africans:

They only act as if they like us when business is involved. Even the police functions this way, they threaten to arrest us for visa violations, we bribe them and they become our friends so we can do the same the next time. I once took a client to a Chinese wholesaler and because this client was ready to purchase a lot of merchandise, the Chinese wholesaler treated us like royalty, but the next afternoon, I spotted the same wholesaler in the market and he treated me like an animal, didn't even engage my presence.<sup>31</sup>

## **The Topic Of Race**

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30 Bodamo, A. The African Trading Community in Guangzhou: An Emerging Bridge for Africa-China relations. Amherst, The China Quarterly, 203, 2013

31 Saibo, Muhammed. Malian Businessman. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xiao Bei. May 2014

*In June 2012, a crowd of angry African protestors took to the streets of Guangzhou. Hundreds took part in the demonstration regardless of the government's swift crackdown against such public display of defiance. After an altercation between a Chinese driver and a Nigerian native regarding a motorbike collision, the Nigerian man was taken into custody for questioning. The authorities gave little explanation as to his cause of death sparking the outrage. The death culminated by the protest exposed simmering racial tensions and sparked intense discourses on race complexes in China.*<sup>32</sup>

Why are Chinese people so racist? This is often the rhetorical question I receive when opening up the race discourse in Guangzhou. “Why are Chinese people so racist,” has been a question I myself had to juggle on numerous occasions while conducting this field study. Whenever I was denied access to a store or had Chinese individuals raise their hands against their noses in my presence, this question became the anchor on which I positioned my perception of the Chinese identity. There is no doubt that there exist in China, a definitively clear social racial hierarchy based on assumptions of race superiority, and the black person has ranked marginal on the racial evolution scale. China has a long way to go. The race issue in Guangzhou is severe and the lack of race policy, race consideration as well as spaces for race discourse has been, by virtue of this study, the number one source of disconnect and isolation both within the Malian inter ethnic realm as well as with regards to the Chinese host population.

Race in Guangzhou has widened the gap between Chinese, Malian and even the grater African migrant population. Africans in Guangzhou are often denied access to taxies and shops, subject of verbal displays of xenophobia and while there are foreign run schools for “Westerns, Japanese and Korean students, Africans have yet to be able to receive permits to set up

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<sup>32</sup>Branigan, T. (2012, June 19). Africans in China protest after death of expat. *theguardian.com*. Retrieved May 27, 2014, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/19/foreigners-protest-china-death-expat>

institutions of their own.”<sup>33</sup> African children are often denied access to Chinese programs and early educational institutions on the account “we only accept Chinese kids.” The race issue can be further sensed by the below interview.

They hold their noses when we pass, they say we smell, they are the one who don't shower but they say it is we that smell. The racism here is very blatant. Some of the Chinese in my building even exit the elevators as soon as an African enters. We could never get along with them, there is too much hatred. The Chinese person is raised to believe he/she is the best, at the center of the world couple that with Chinese media portrayal of Africans, and you have modern-day racism.<sup>34</sup>

The Mainland Chinese portrayal of Africa and its people has been relegated to the Chinese agency and aid where China assumes the paternalistic role of provider, providing humanitarian and infrastructural aid to a weak, docile and primitive Africa, denying the existence of African agency.

### *They Beat Our Children*

There have been increasing concerns of physical abuse projected by the Chinese towards Malian children. During my first couple of days in Guangzhou, I was notified by various tenants of Xia Tang Xi Lou complex that the Chinese neighbors often resort to physical abuse in containing the “boisterous and barbaric” nature of African children. I had assumed these accusations to be exaggerations perpetuated by the growing race divide until I witnessed one of

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<sup>33</sup>Gillet, K. Eastern Promise in Little Africa. *The Global Mall*. Retrieved May 25, 2014, from <http://www.the.globalmall.org/features/eastpromise-in-little-africa/546/>, 2013

<sup>34</sup> Faye, Satou. Malian Woman. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xiao Bei. May 2014.

these exchanges my self. Here is an excerpt from my diary:

Today, I have witnessed the type of racism I did not believe even existed on the fringes of society. As my Chinese brother played in the hallway, the Chinese neighbor of my host family rushed out of his apartment with a shoe, the heel portion directed at my host brother's head, as he violently and continuously planted the heel in my brother's skull, he yelled, "you stupid person why did you have to come here, you stupid person why did you have to come here?" When the authorities arrived, he explained the source of his rage came from the fact that the child was touching the incense sticks burning near his Buddhist shrine.<sup>35</sup>

Attacks such as this one, according to my host mother were quite frequent and many times the authorities would have to get involved but they usually resulted in a warning for the attacker and stiches for the attacked.

### *Stealing Markets*

The racial tension between the Host and Malian population is further heightened by accusations of "stealing markets." Walking along the strip of Xiao Bei, one would be enthralled by the abundance of African products along the market places. From African attire, to African food products, Guangzhou has it all. According to Same, one of the leaders of the Mali organization:

What we Africans do is ship products from Africa to sell to the African community present in Guangzhou. What the Chinese do, is send secret buyers to buy samples of our products and the next thing you know, the Chinese are mass producing copies of these products and forcing us, with the help of the corrupt authority, out of business.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Excerpt from Author's diary. May 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Modi, Hatou. Malian Businessman. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xiao Bei. May 2014.



These Chinese markets not only affect the African businessmen of Guangzhou, but also devastate the localized businesses of Sub Saharan African as perspective buyers now flock to the Chinese border to source cheaper versions of products sources sourced on the continent. This tension in the economic realm has also served as subtle source of isolation and antagonism with regards to the host population. As the heightening race divisions continue to penetrate such areas as Guangzhou, the division and isolation between populations in this area becomes broadened. These tensions indeed contribute to the imagined communities engaged by the Malian enclave of Guangzhou.

### **Trapped by Status: The Topic Of Immigration**

#### *Between “Legislation” and Practice*

The harsh and ambiguous immigration procedures implemented by the national and Guangdong provincial governments have deepened both the segregation of immigrants and their estrangement from the host population. Serious policy inertia and lack of official immigration data has left the immigration discourse in the media realm which has tended to focus on illegal migrants, drug trafficking allegations and other migrant related issues, shaping the cultural gap and influencing severe, more regulatory procedures.

Immigrants in Guangzhou are subject to harsh and discriminatory immigration regulations. Every African migrant engaged in this study referred to the immigration “policy” as the number one problem faced by migrants in Guangzhou. The haphazard nature of the visa inspection has been amongst other things, the number one implementation which has kept the

Malian population constantly anxious and reminded of its foreignness. In Guangzhou, although there exists signs everywhere which state “all migrants must carry passports at all times to facilitate random visa inspections” it is usually the African immigrants that are subject to this regulation. Often, the Guangzhou authority coordinates massive raids in places such as residential complexes occupied by African immigrants, hotels known for high African occupancy and local eateries where African customers are forced to present documents. The implications of immigration regulations is best captured in interview 20

We are subject to raids, in fact our homes are constantly raided at the most inconvenient of times, we are forced to exit our bathrooms and bedrooms. They don't give us time to get dressed. They yell at us and force us to present our visa. If our visas are expired, we are arrested on the spot, detained indefinitely until we provide airfare for our own deportation. If our visas seem to be valid, they proceed to trash our homes, flipping mattresses and moving couching in their search for “hidden violators.”<sup>37</sup>

As a person coming from the United States where, most of the immigrant population is either undocumented or hold expired visas, such strict policies are hard to fathom, however, I myself had been subject to these regulations. At 6:47 am on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, while staying in a hotel, a group of policemen including four men and one woman, vigorously pounded on my door, demanded I open and present my passport. After I retrieved my passport and it became evident that I held a valid student visa, they proceeded to search my room while they snickered at me and made conversations amongst themselves regarding my presence. Once the search was complete, they left without a word, proceeding to the next room.

The constant raids coupled with vague policies have shaped the Malian identity. Malians in Guangzhou are very isolated, a contributing factor of which is immigration policy. Because of the constant visa crackdowns, Malian families seldom immerse themselves with the greater

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37 Haji, Haji. Malian Businessman. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. Xiao Bei. May 2014.

Malian community in fear of “being at the wrong place at the wrong time “and rarely host guest in fear of the possibility of the guest’s visa violation. As for the host population, according to the subjects of this study, “they have already categorized all of us as illegal drug dealers” and this categorization has sometimes led to the random appearance of police tipped by anonymous calls.<sup>38</sup> Another facet of the visa system is the month-to-month visa renewal system where migrants are forced to flock neighboring cities of Macau or Hong Kong in presenting their visas regardless of the current validity of their visas. This policy is strictly implemented, often a hassle and costly to the average migrant person. Because of these policies and their growing implications on the Malian identity, the growing gap between both the Malian community and with regards to its host community is becoming more evident. The construction of imagined communities has become one of the only recourse engaged by Malians seeking a sense of identity to accommodate the growing implications of migration.

## Influence

Amidst the lack of full acclimation and the existence of discriminatory race and immigration categorizations, there is no doubt that the Malian and Chinese agencies have been influenced by the former group. Although most of these influences have been relegated to the economic realm, there is no doubt that these projections exist and are the pushing factor to better China Migrant relations.

## *Calculator and pigeon communication*

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<sup>38</sup> Kalilu, Badu. Malian Businessman. Interviewed by Author. Personal Interview. May 2014.

Although there exists between the host and migrant population a language barrier, this setback is fascinatingly facilitated for in the business sector where there is the mutual understanding in conversation. Two fundamental reasons for this are: the existence of both calculator communication and pigeon language. Calculator communication is the act of engaging a calculator to complete business transactions. Usually, in the business realm both parties engage a calculator coupled by body language usually in the form of head nodding or shaking to settle prices. Pigeon language is the gradual existence of a language not necessarily mandarin or an ethnic form but a combination of universal words and phrases understood and engaged by both groups.

### *Trust*

One of the most fascinating influences projected by both the Malian and Host population is the trust dynamics. In the markets, especially local food markets, Malians are often allowed to accumulate debt and often leave purchased products as well as small children out in the open communal spaces without fear of theft. This trust has influenced how each group regards the other. Xiao Bei is a relatively safe space, where members of both the host and migrant population can walk the streets at various hours without fear of criminal activity projected by the former group. This mutual understanding has contributed to the open door policy engaged by both Malian and Chinese tenants who readily leave doors unlocked without apprehension and fear of consequence.

### *Maids/secretaries*

Another factor to the exchange is the immersion of Chinese maids and secretaries in the Malian home and workplace. Malian families employ maids to both perform domestic work and care for children when necessary. The exchange between the Malian woman and the maid usually mirrors that of a sibling relationship, they often joke, exchange ideas and both contribute to the upbringing of the newest generation of migrant children, whom in the future will possibly engage different world views, strengthen China-migrant relations. In the business realm, Chinese secretaries employed by Malian menserve as intermediaries between the migrant and host wholesaler or manufacturer. These secretaries perform various tasks for their bosses including providing impromptu language lessons. Many of the secretary boss relations have resulted in marriage and children. In these sectors, there often exists the appreciation and exchange of cultures necessary for bridging contemporary migrant- host relations.

## **Conclusion**

Over the last decade there has been a huge increase in engagement between China and Africa across all fronts of foreign relations especially in the realms of trade, finance and migration. As China continues to push into Africa in pursuit of economic resources and diplomatic relations, many Africans are migrating to China in search of economic opportunities backed by cheap labor markets and the prospects for “low-end globalization”. Since the country’s late 1990’s economic boom, thousands of traders and perspective businessmen predominately from West Africa have migrated to the city of Guangzhou, creating African enclaves in the middle of the southern Chinese metropolis. Contemporary analysis on the African

Chinese diaspora, although scarce, has often been relegated to the spheres of economics and the Chinese agency, boasting China as the destination for opportunity.

As the contemporary African presence on the Chinese landscape has been a relatively new phenomenon, so have the discourses surrounding this presence, discourses often relegated to the spheres of economics and the Chinese agency, boasting China as the destination for opportunity. The problems with these conversations are that they neglect the African contribution to the globalized space, the implications of migration on the African presence and the stratification of the African identity and formation of migrant communities.

There is often a compromise to migration which contemporary academia has failed to recognize. Often, migrants are forced to construct and reconstruct their notions of identity to facilitate the social and economic implications of the new landscape. These compromises have come with great costs and as a result, a complex interplay of race, immigration and identity have taken form, contributing to the African notion of self and community in a Chinese social context. This paper takes a more nuanced approach in arguing that in order to fully understand and explicate the internal workings of the larger African community in Guangzhou, the African presence must be viewed as highly variegated, composed of distinct people, carrying distinct ideologies and concepts of community. Furthermore, in creating a comprehensive analysis, this paper argues that the source land histories of the specific migrant communities must be engaged. Who were these people before they migrated? What concept of community did they engage on the source land? Lastly, this paper argues that often, there exists economic and social factors which construct the Diasporan experience and the way its members decide to facilitate host spaces, but these factors and the nature of their contributions can only be understood when examiners engage both the past and present circumstances of a Diasporan community.

In engaging the Malian community of Guangzhou and comparing its construction of community to the structure of community implemented by the strict caste system of Mali, this paper argues that migration and the changing markets which propel it, have forced the Malians of Guangzhou to abandoned old structures and create interethnic imagined Communities to facilitate the economic and social factors of their new surroundings. There exists an internal spectrum, of which on one end lays Malian men who because they engage the economic realm take no part in community and on the other end lays women, whom because they take no part in the economic realm exaggerate community, thus creating imagined communities. The factors of race, economics and immigration policy have intensely contributed to these constructed communities as well as the internal and external isolation of Malians in regards to both their interethnic makeup and with regards to the larger host population. Xiao Bei, the labyrinth of the migrant melting pot serves as great case study of China Africa relations as well as the larger Chinese concept of race and identity. If China is potentially to become the next superpower, its migrant relations and concepts of racial hierarchies must me reinterpreted. Guangzhou must, from a globalization and geopolitical perspectives become the connecting port of China and Africa.

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## **Appendix 1: Recommendations for Further Study**

1. Comparative analysis of the Malian settlement in Guangzhou and Malian settlements of other Diasporas.
2. The role of Chinese maids/nannies in strengthening Africa-China relations.
3. The role of interracial marriages in shaping Chinese-Migrant relations

## **Appendix 2: Research Questions**

This section covers the broader fundamental research questions engaged by this study in capturing the implications of migration on the Malian identity in Guangzhou. This section neither covers every question used in this study nor does it represent sole questions used to write this paper.

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you lived in Guangzhou?
3. What is the nature of your work? What do you do/sell?
4. How do you define community?
5. Do you abide by caste classifications implemented by the Malian caste system?
6. What are the greatest setbacks faced by Malians in Guangzhou?
7. What are your thoughts on Malian Chinese relations in Guangzhou?
8. What are your thoughts on Malian-Malian relations in Guangzhou?
9. Describe the host population of Guangzhou?
10. Describe the Malian enclave of Guangzhou?